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SUBJECT: Jordan Promises to Implement Regulations to Ease Entry and Residency Procedures for Iraqis

REF: Amman 712

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¶1. (SBU) The Iraqi-Jordanian Technical Trade and Investment Committee announced on June 22 that the GOJ would apply "softer entry and residency procedures" for Iraqi businessmen and investors. The announcement followed a February 2009 decision by the Government of Jordan (GOJ) to issue more lenient regulations for Iraqi businessmen and investors entering or residing in Jordan in order to enhance bilateral economic relations (reftel). Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT) officials told EconOff that during the committee meeting the Iraqi delegation expressed appreciation for the revised regulations issued earlier in the year, but asked that the scope of the new regulations be expanded. MOIT plans to provide recommendations for additional measures to the Ministry of Interior for consideration.

¶2. (SBU) A senior Jordanian General Intelligence Department (GID) official at the Jordan-Iraq border confided to EconOffs that his department had only recently begun applying the entry procedures announced in February when his department received orders to put them into effect. The official reported the most significant point of this new directive was the establishment of more direct security and intelligence exchanges between the Jordanian and Iraqi governments on visa issues. He thought the result would be that no Iraqi would be turned away from the Jordanian border unless a clear security risk was indicated. He further noted that they were now seeing increased border traffic due to this "opening of the window."

¶3. (SBU) Iraqi businessmen, however, have told EconOffs they have not been impressed with implementation of the new regulations and did not anticipate this latest announcement to make any significant difference since they perceive Jordanian border officials as having vast authority to do whatever they wish. Muhammad Al-Shammari, an Iraqi businessman residing in Amman, explained that he did not believe this announcement would entice more Iraqi businessmen to Jordan, as he knew several who had tried after GOJ made the initial announcement in February 2009, but had been denied entry for no apparent reason. An official at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman concurred, commenting that for now the more lenient entry and residency procedures remained, "all talk," with little practical application in the field.

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